

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and Surgery

Information for patients

Why might I be advised to stop taking HRT before surgery?

Some types of HRT can increase the risk of blood clots (thrombosis) around the time of surgery. Thrombosis is a serious complication that may cause:

- Leg swelling or pain
- Chest discomfort
- Shortness of breath.

Thrombosis requires extra treatment and can have long term implications. In some cases, they can be life-threatening.

To reduce this risk, patients are sometimes advised to stop certain types of HRT before surgery. HRT patches, gels, and sprays **do not** increase the risk of blood clots and can be continued safely.

Can I switch to a different type of HRT that I can continue during my surgery?

Yes. In most cases, your GP can suggest a different type of HRT (usually a patch, gel, or spray). If switching, this should be done at least 4 weeks before your surgery. Once you have fully recovered, you may be able to return to your usual HRT if you wish.

I don't want to switch or stop taking my HRT before surgery – is that okay?

We strongly recommend stopping certain types of HRT, or switching to an alternative, especially if:

- You are having major surgery, or
- You have a personal or family history of blood clots.

We do understand, however, that stopping or switching can be very difficult if you have previously had severe menopausal symptoms (such as hot flushes, sweats, low mood, anxiety, or mood swings). The decision is ultimately about weighing up the risks and benefits for you.

What will happen next if I decide to keep taking HRT before surgery?

Your surgical team will be informed that you have chosen to continue HRT against advice.

They will try to reduce your risk of blood clots, for example by:

- Using compression stockings, and/or
- Prescribing blood-thinning medication.

Please note: These treatments may already be standard for certain surgeries, but they cannot completely remove the additional risk of blood clots caused by HRT.

In a small number of cases, your medical team may feel strongly that HRT must be stopped before surgery. If so, they will explain this and discuss it with you.

It's OK to Ask

When you understand what's going on with your health, you can make better decisions around your care and treatment.

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